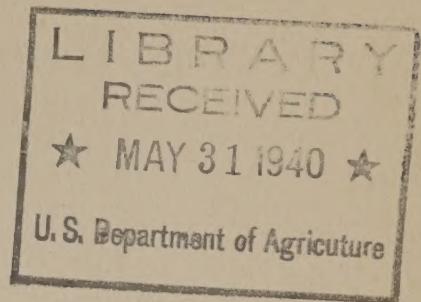


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United States Department of Agriculture
Bureau of Agricultural Economics



STATEMENT ON FARM POPULATION TRENDS

by

Conrad Taeuber,
Agricultural Economist.

Presented before the Senate Committee on Education and Labor

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26 JUL 1940

Native White Migrants Born in Selected States
and Living Elsewhere, 1930.

Migration has been a characteristic of American population growth. The settlement of the West and the rapid growth of large cities would have been impossible without it. Every Census since 1870 has reported that between one-fifth and one-fourth of the native white persons living in the United States were living in some States other than the one in which they had been born. In 1930, 25,000,000 persons were living in a State other than their State of birth and 4,000,000 of the 35,000,000 persons who had been born in the South were living outside of the South.

In 25 States, the proportion of native white persons who had been born in some other State was above the average for the United States as a whole. Seventy-three percent of the native white residents of Arizona had come from some other State and in California, Oregon, Washington, Nevada, Colorado, Wyoming, Idaho, Montana, Oklahoma, and Florida, half or more had come in from elsewhere.

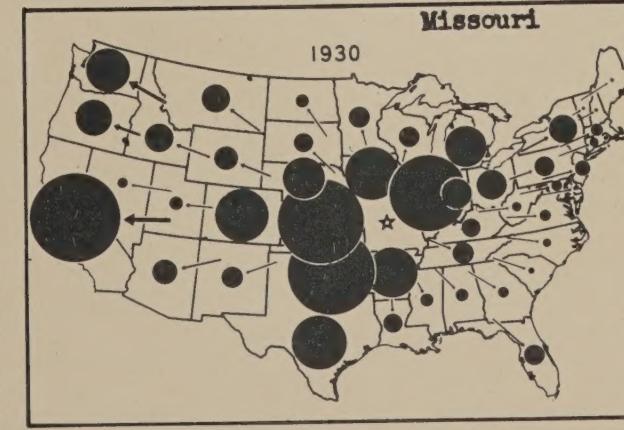
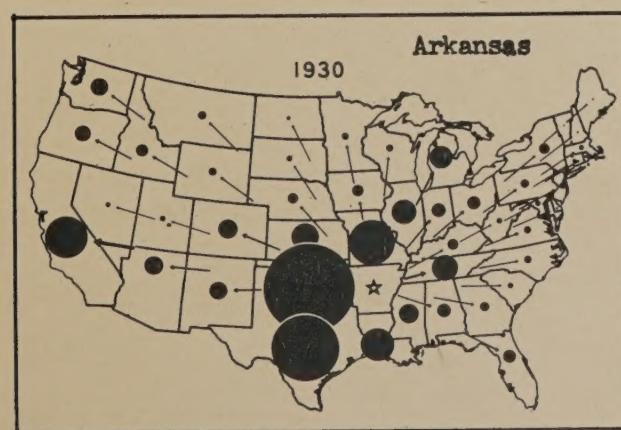
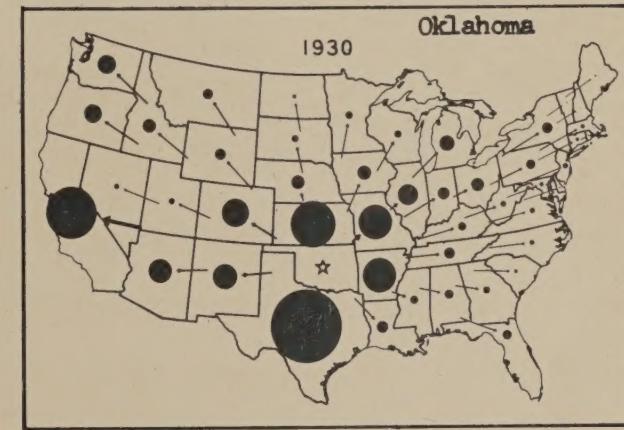
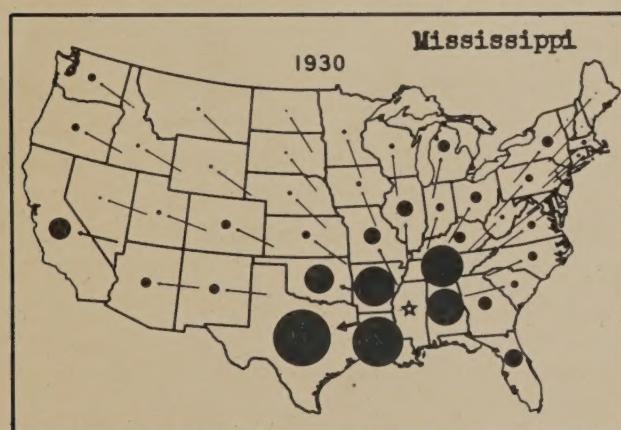
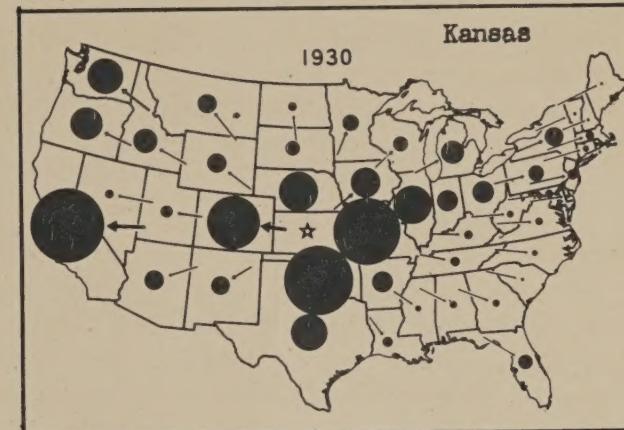
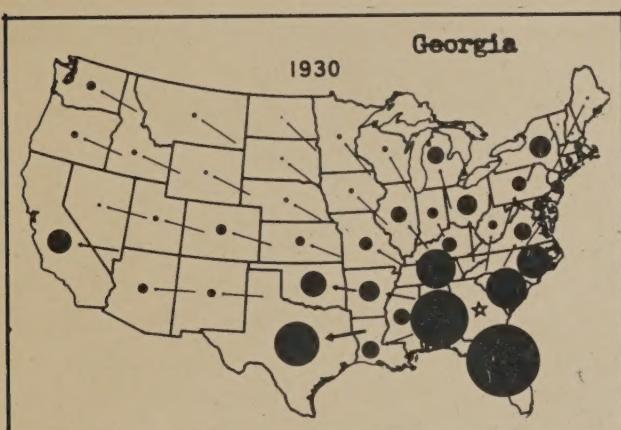
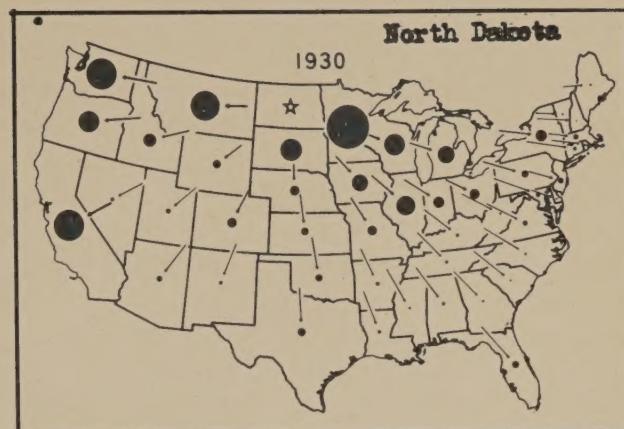
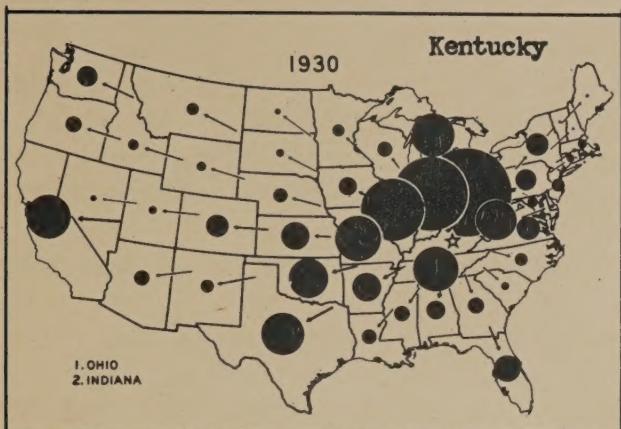
Interstate migration during the 1920's was especially directed toward certain States. California alone received about 1,648,000 persons from other States, probably more than during the ten years since 1930. New York was second with 454,000; Michigan with 412,000 and Florida with 329,000, occupied third and fourth places, respectively. Georgia's net loss by migration to other States was 395,000; that of Pennsylvania, 389,000; South Carolina, 274,000; Virginia and Iowa, 263,000 each; and Kentucky, 260,000.

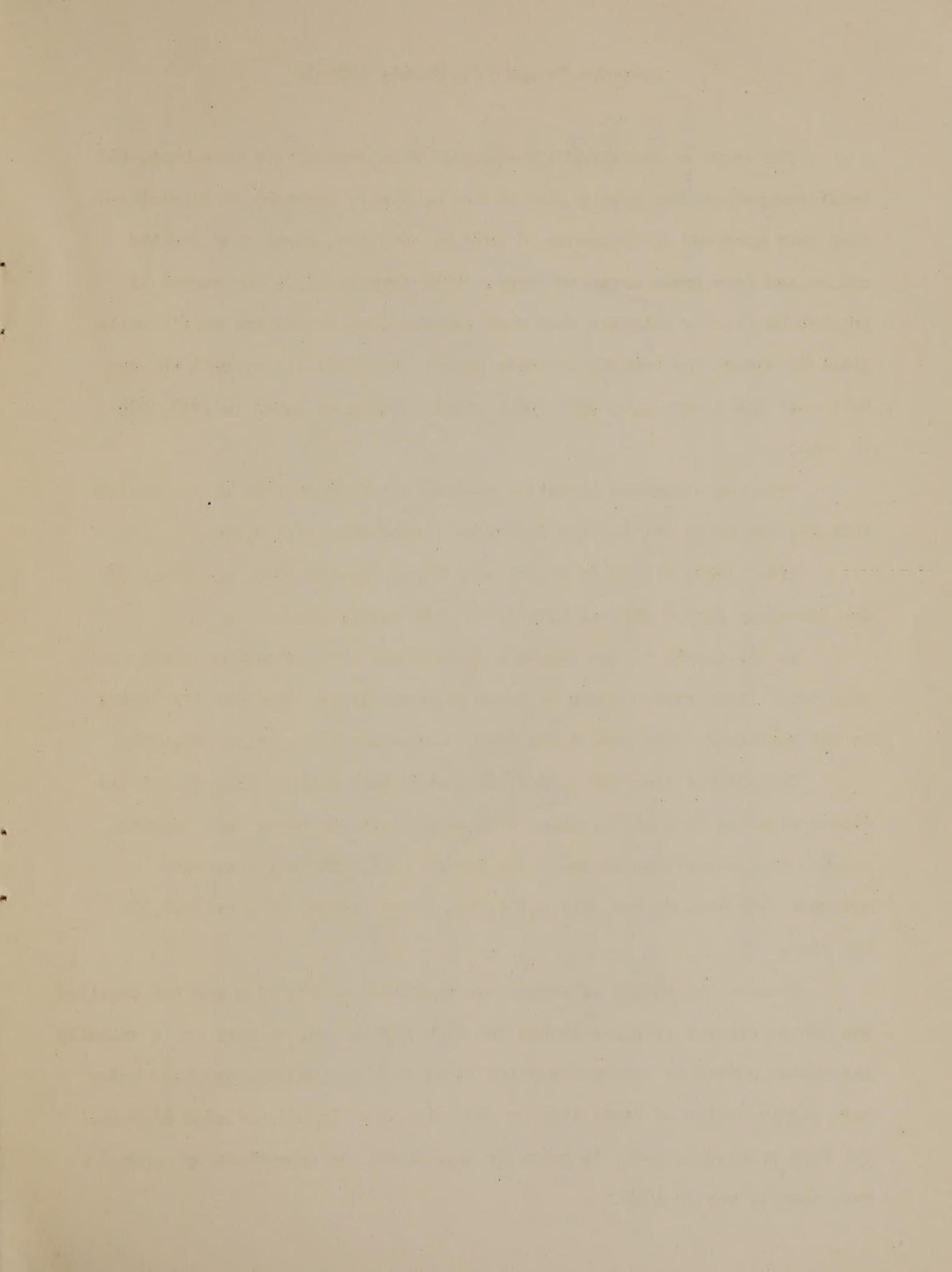
The maps for 1930 show how migrants from the Southern States going north tended to go directly north. Those who started along the Atlantic Seaboard more frequently followed the coast line, but those who started from an inland State more frequently went to an inland northern State. Thus in 1930, New York City reported 38,075 residents born in South Carolina, but only 7,102 born in Kentucky. In Chicago, on the other hand, there were 27,668 persons from Kentucky and 4,926 from South Carolina.

The largest number of migrants went to nearby States. The maps for Middle Western States show this clearly and they also show the strong attraction of the Far Western States.

In the exchange of population during the 1920's, the Pacific Coast States were at the receiving end - the Great Plains States were at the sending end. Oklahoma, Kansas, and Nebraska each gave up more than 100,000 persons to other States and most of the other Plains States gave up smaller numbers, but California, Oregon, and Washington together received 1,773,000.

Native White Migrants Born in Selected States and Living Elsewhere, 1930





Movement To and From Farms, 1920-38

The drift of the gainfully employed from agriculture to nonagricultural occupations has been a part of the urbanward movement of population. Each year hundreds of thousands of persons move from farms to towns and cities and from urban areas to farms. From 1910 to 1930, the excess of population flowing cityward over that flowing countryward was sufficiently great to exceed the natural increase in the farm population, with the result that there were 1,900,000 fewer people living on farms in 1930 than in 1910.

This net urbanward migration reached its highest tide in the period 1922-26, the total net for the five-year period being 3,480,000.

After 1926, the drift to the city began slowing down, the total for the five-year period 1927 to 1931 being only 1,588,000.

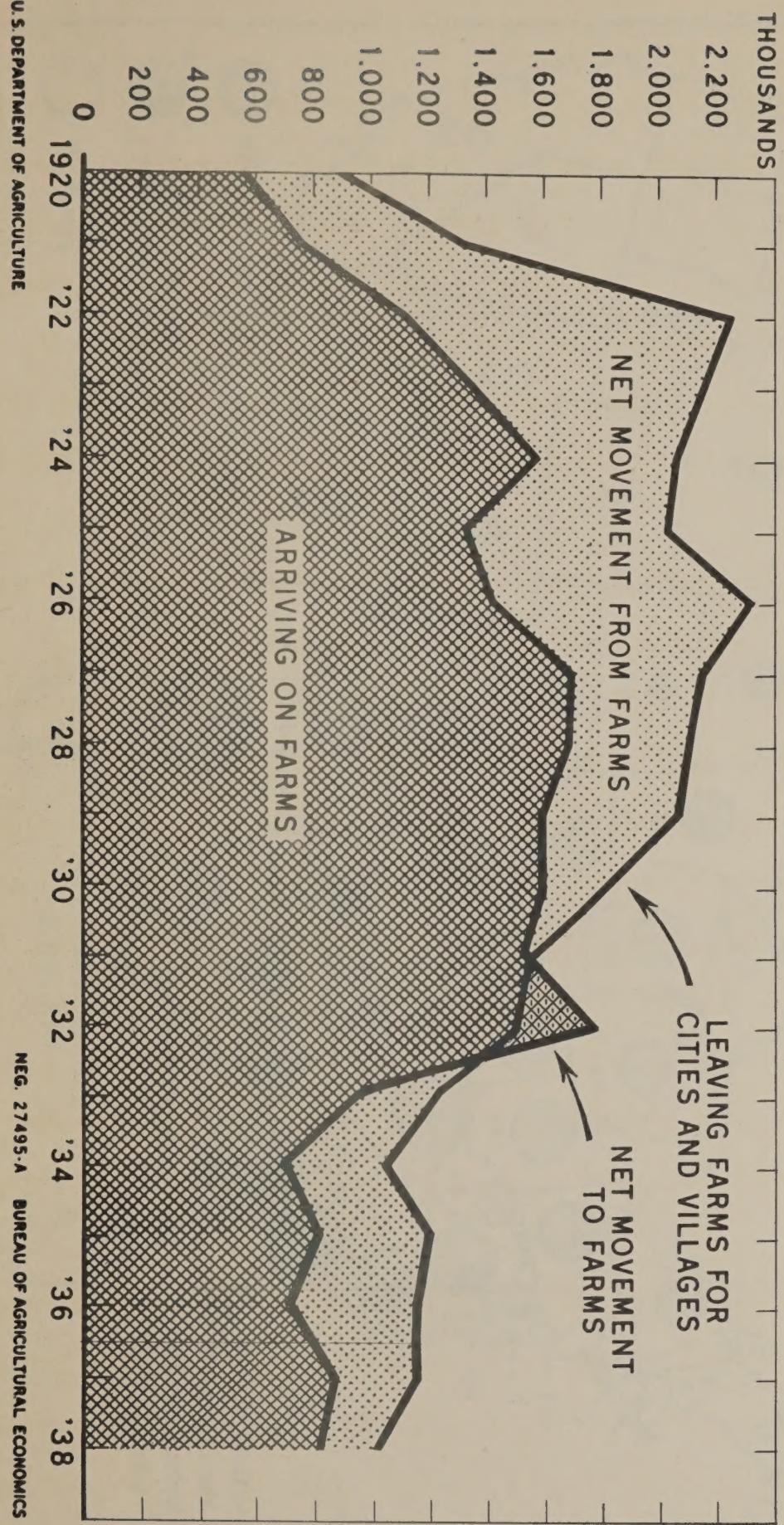
At the depths of the depression, 1932 and 1933, almost as many persons moved from urban centers to farms as moved in the opposite direction. In the year 1932, there was a net back-to-the-land movement of 266,000.

By 1934 the tide had definitely turned back to the city, and it has flowed steadily in that direction ever since. It has never yet, however, reached the proportions which it did before 1927. The net urbanward movement from 1934-38 was only 1,604,000, or an average of about 320,000 per year.

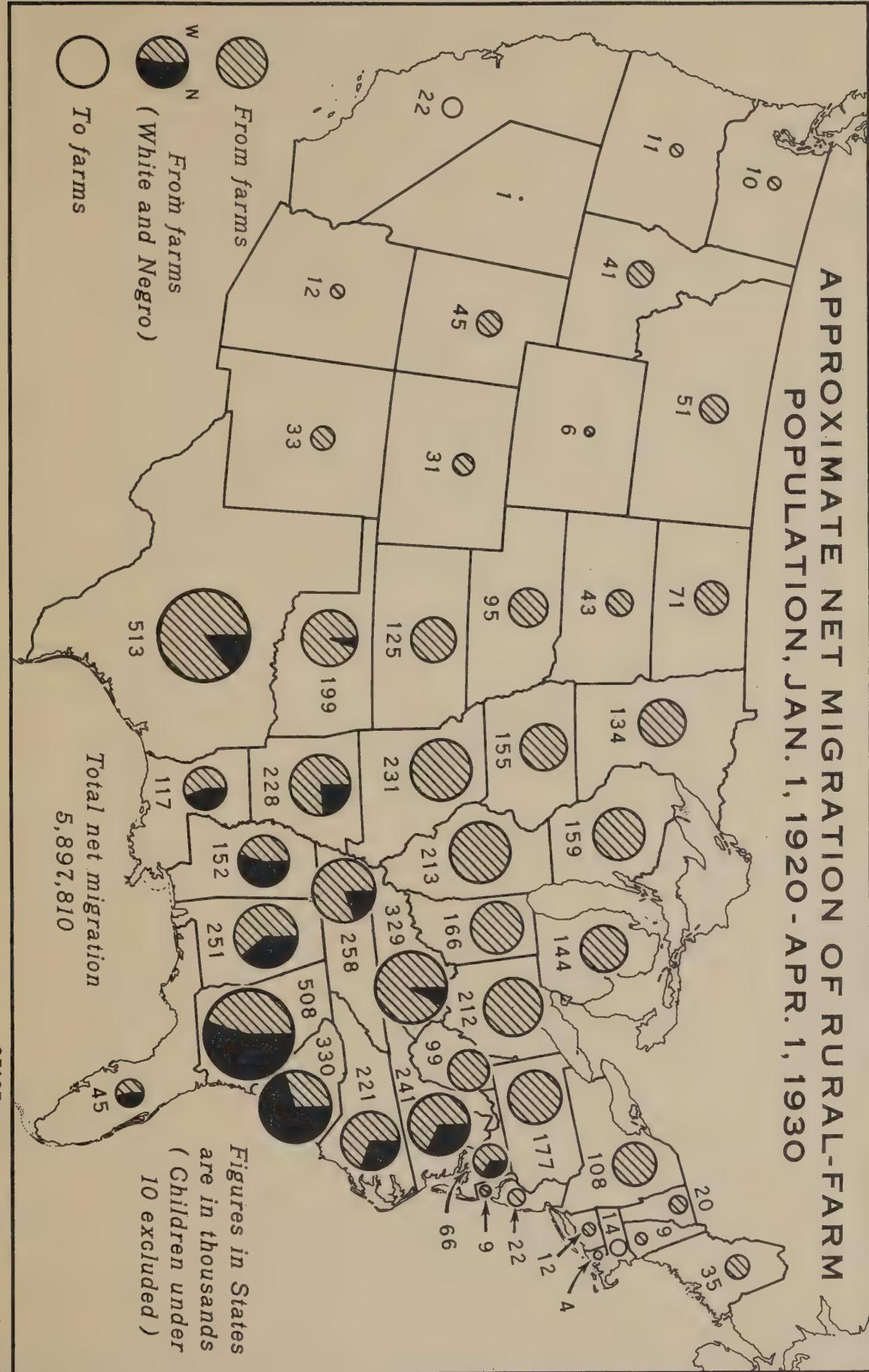
Because the amount of annual net migration to the city has not equalled the annual natural increase within the farm population, we have had a steadily increasing number of persons on farms since 1930 and undoubtedly have today more people living on farms than at any other time in our national history. The farm population today is probably 32,250,000, or approximately 2,000,000 more than it was in 1930.

MOVEMENT TO AND FROM FARMS, 1920-38

BIRTHS AND DEATHS NOT TAKEN INTO ACCOUNT



APPROXIMATE NET MIGRATION OF RURAL-FARM
POPULATION, JAN. 1, 1920 - APR. 1, 1930

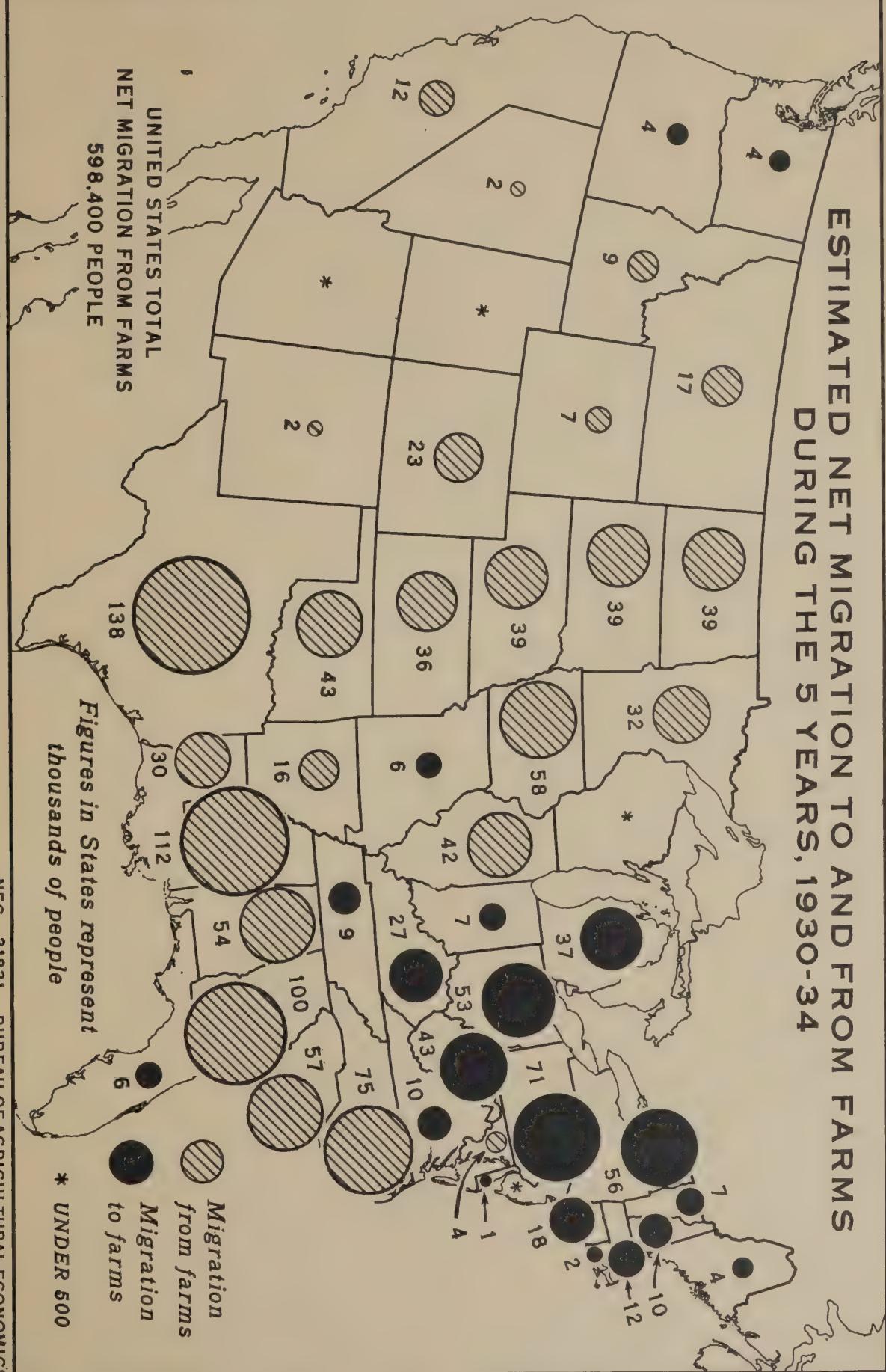


Migration to and from Farms, 1930-34

From Tennessee and Michigan to Virginia and Maine, but excluding Maryland - that is, throughout most of the manufacturing belt and a little beyond - migration to farms during the depression years, 1930-34, exceeded that from farms. In the Cotton Belt, the prairie section of the Corn Belt, and the Wheat Belt - areas of commercial agriculture and high proportion of tenancy - there was a continued migration away from farms during these years. Texas, Mississippi, and Georgia contributed more than 100,000 each, but in Kentucky - which had experienced a large migration from farms before 1930 - the net migration to farms between 1930 and 1935 amounted to 27,000 persons.

Migration from farms was greatest in those areas where commercial agriculture is most developed and these same areas received very little of the back-to-the-land movement.

ESTIMATED NET MIGRATION TO AND FROM FARMS
DURING THE 5 YEARS, 1930-34



U. S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

NEG. 31831 BUREAU OF AGRICULTURAL ECONOMICS

Net Migration of Farm Population, 1930-35

The volume of migration from farms between 1930 and 1935 was only one-fifth as large as during the 1920's. Whereas, before 1930 only a few areas reported a movement to farms, there were numerous areas which reported a net movement to farms between 1930 and 1935.

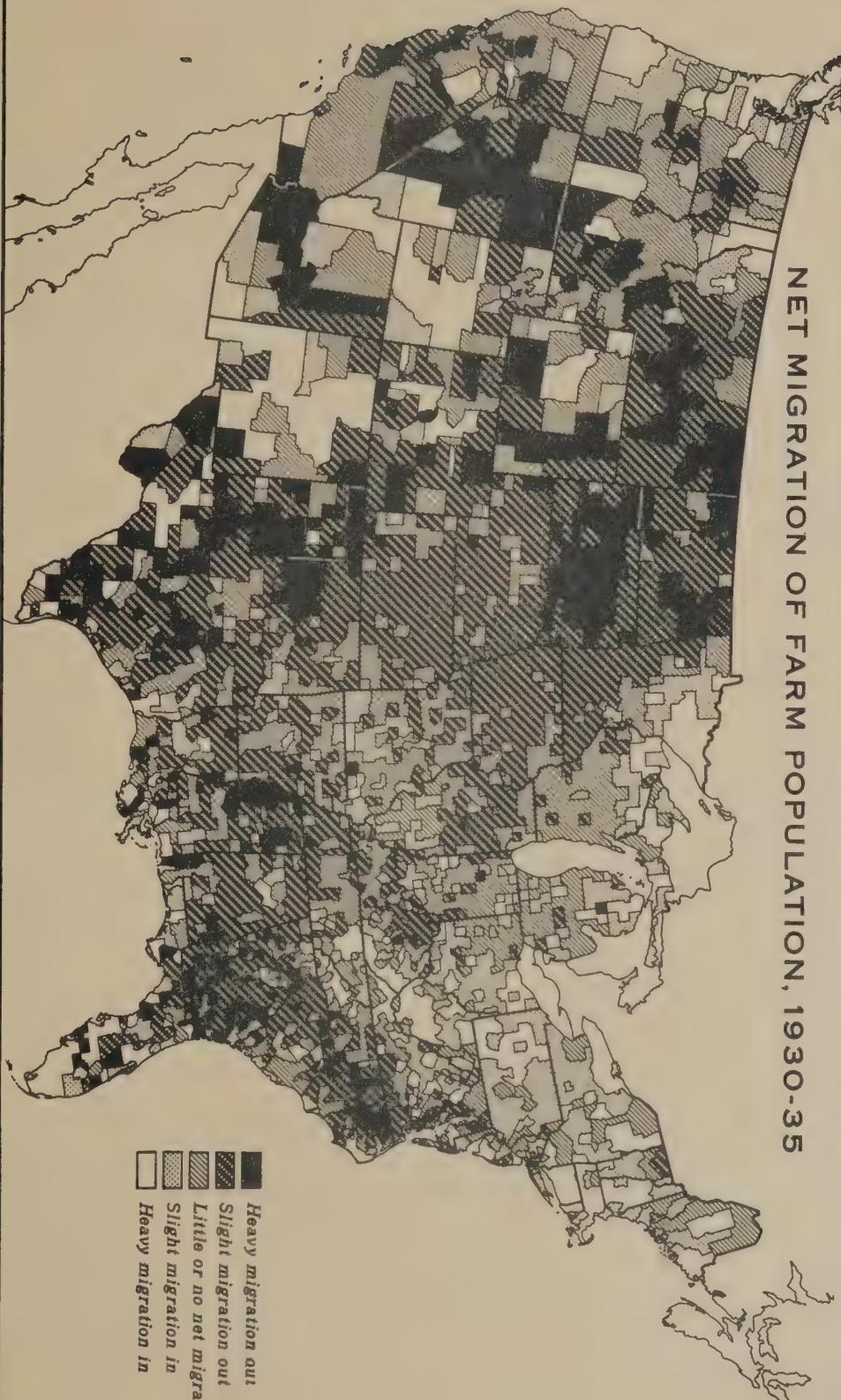
The movement to farms during those years was most marked in the areas around large cities, in parts of the Lake States Cut-Over Area, the Southern Appalachians and Ozarks, in the Rio Grande Valley of New Mexico, and in the Pacific Coast States. Except for the territory around large cities and the areas in the Far West, these areas generally had had a heavy outward movement during the 1920's. But this migration had not been sufficient to bring about a stable balance between the numbers of the population and the land resources. In such areas, where the rates of natural increase tend to be high, the depression years were marked by an increased pressure of population on resources due in part to migration from urban centers and in part to a reduction in the volume of out-migration by the relatively large number of maturing youth. Increases in farm population resulting from migration to farms, and decreased migrations away from farms, or both, were most commonly found in poor land areas where farming is essentially non-commercial. During the period since 1930, migrants to farms generally sought out places where they might start farming operations with a minimum of capital, i.e., the poorest land areas where land values or rentals are low.

But in the more commercialized farming areas - in the Cotton, Corn, and Wheat Belts - there was migration away from farms, as there had been before 1930. Drought, continued technological changes in agriculture, acreage restriction - all were contributing factors in the continuation of the trend of migration away from farms which had been observed before 1930. Except for the western parts of the Great Plains Area, where the process of settlement was being completed during the 1920's, the Great Plains had become an area exporting population before 1930. The drought served to accelerate the movement away from farms in that area.

In the Pacific Coast States, while the numbers of migrants during the present decade appear to be not much larger than in the 1920's there are differences in the type of migrants for the two decades and in the economic opportunities available. A large proportion of the migrants between 1920 and 1930 was readily absorbed in an expanding urban and rural economy, and many of them brought sufficient capital to assure continued self-support. The migrants of recent years have come with little capital and the majority enter a labor market in which the need is for unskilled seasonal workers. Many of those who have been able to settle on the land, have settled on small unproductive farms, not suited to permanent occupancy.

There is some evidence that one reason why the more prosperous farming areas continue to send young people to cities lies in the fact that they can provide better educational training and thus equip their young people more adequately for urban employment. The fact that poor land areas cannot provide adequate educational opportunities thus appears to be one obstacle to the volume of migration needed to relieve pressure of population on resources there.

NET MIGRATION OF FARM POPULATION, 1930-35



Natural Increase of the Farm Population, 1930-34

If there were no migration from farms, the farm population would increase by 350,000 to 400,000 persons per year, this being the excess of births over deaths. Two-thirds of this natural increase in the farm population is in the South where only half the farm families are located.

Unless opportunities for urban employment increase very greatly, the population on farms will continue to increase, for migration from farms to towns and cities since 1939 has generally been less than the excess of births over deaths.

Should the net migration away from farms again reach the rates which prevailed during the decade 1920-30 (a prospect not now apparent), the farm population would gradually decline to 29,000,000 by 1960.

If there were to be no net migration from farms, that is, if the number of people moving to farms from towns and cities should equal those moving in the opposite direction, as was the case for the period 1932-33 (again a prospect hardly to be contemplated), the farm population would be 45,000,000 by 1960, or 41 percent greater than the present.

Should the rate of net migration away from farms during the next two decades (1940 to 1960) be half as great as during the pre-depression decade of the 1920's (and half is considerably above the rate during the decade of the 1930's), the increase in farm population (by 1960) will be 16 percent, or 5,000,000 people. This would mean an increase of 4,000,000 persons of working age, 15 to 65, in the farm population.

A large part of any increase in farm population which may take place in the future will probably be in the areas where opportunities for profitable farming are least.

Estimated Numbers of Persons on Farms, 1940, Who Would
Not Be There if Migration Since 1930 had
been at the Same Rate as 1920-30

Since the beginning of the depression, the rate of migration from farms has been considerably slowed down, but the number of young people reaching maturity on farms has continued to increase. It is estimated that approximately three and one-half million persons are living on farms in 1940 who would not be living there if migration from farms had been at the same rate as it was between 1920 and 1930. This reduction in the number of persons leaving farms has been an important factor in unemployment on farms.

Of the total unemployed, 1,662,000 are males, and this number bears a close relationship to the number of unemployed males living on farms as reported by the 1937 Census of Unemployment.

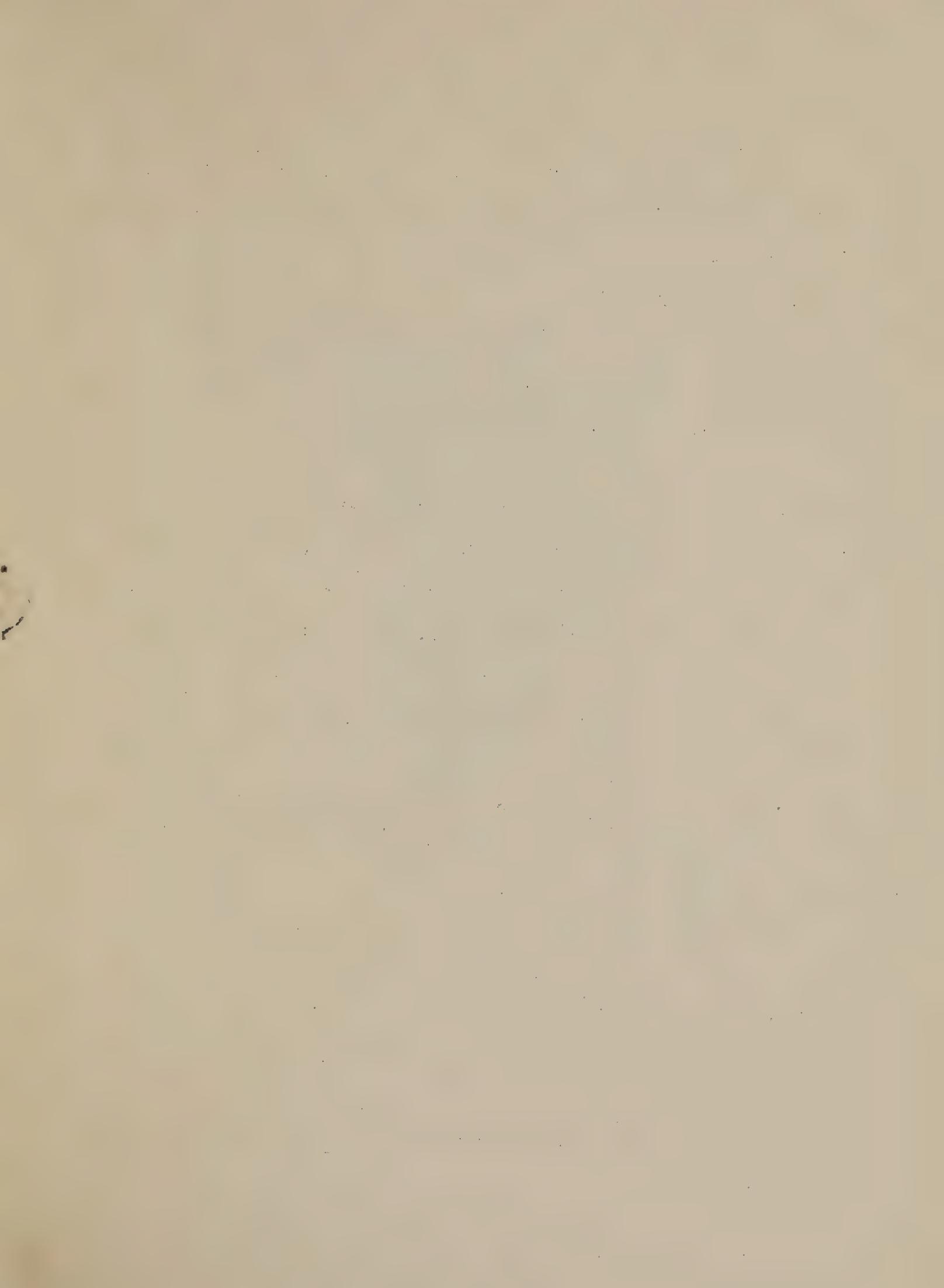
Since young adulthood is normally the period of greatest migration, the effect of the reduced migration from farms has been especially marked in this group. According to these estimates, there are approximately 2,000,000 more persons aged 15 to 29 on farms in 1940 than would have been the case had migration been at the same rate as during the 1920's. A large part of the rural youth problem is a result of this situation, for these young people are finding restricted opportunities for employment in industry as well as in commercial agriculture.

The migration during the 1920's was not sufficient to bring about all of the adjustments between rural population and resources which appear desirable from the standpoint of the most effective utilization of resources.

The relatively larger increase in farm population in the poorest land areas is in large part due to the reduction of migration from farms and, thus, the disadvantages of these areas, both to the adults living there and the children being reared there, have been intensified.

Estimated number of persons on farms, 1940, who would
not be there if migration since 1930 had been at
the same rate as 1920-30.

| Age Group | | | | Male | Female | Total |
|--------------------------|---|---|---|----------------|----------------|----------------|
| Under 10 years of age | | | | 92,000 | 133,000 | 225,000 |
| 10 - 14 | " | " | " | 78,000 | 111,000 | 189,000 |
| 15 - 19 | " | " | " | 124,000 | 217,000 | 341,000 |
| 20 - 24 | " | " | " | 397,000 | 429,000 | 826,000 |
| 25 - 29 | " | " | " | 463,000 | 386,000 | 849,000 |
| 30 - 34 | " | " | " | 235,000 | 187,000 | 422,000 |
| 35 - 39 | " | " | " | 58,000 | 57,000 | 115,000 |
| 40 - 44 | " | " | " | 17,000 | 42,000 | 59,000 |
| 45 - 49 | " | " | " | 37,000 | 74,000 | 111,000 |
| 50 - 54 | " | " | " | -31,000 | 52,000 | 21,000 |
| 55 - 56 | " | " | " | 58,000 | 85,000 | 143,000 |
| 60 years of age and over | | | | <u>134,000</u> | <u>154,000</u> | <u>288,000</u> |
| Total | | | | 1,662,000 | 1,927,000 | 3,589,000 |



Indices of Drought Intensity, 1930-36

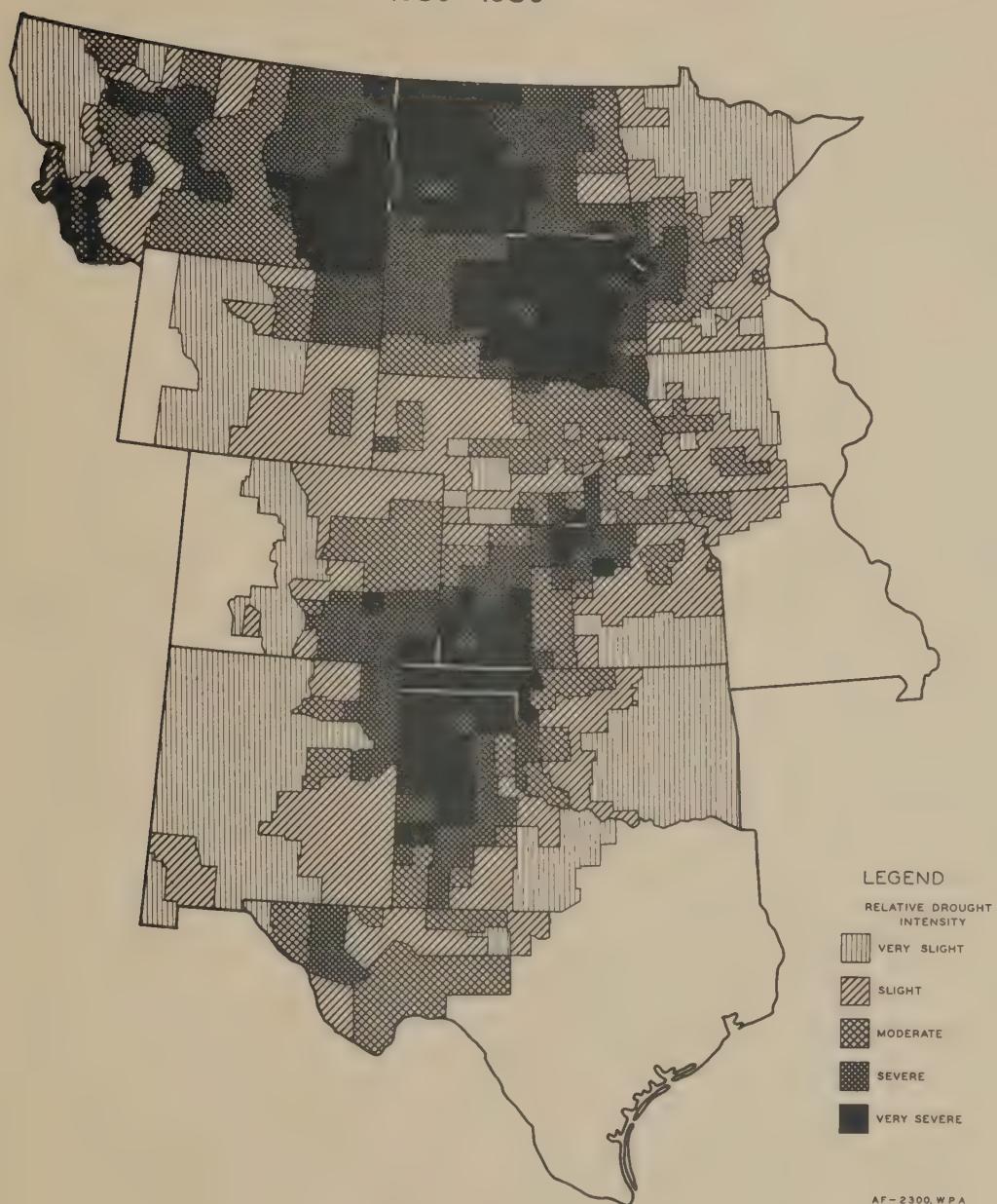
Since 1930 a large section of the Great Plains has suffered from severe droughts. When the counties of the Great Plains and the surrounding territory are considered in the light of the combined indices of drought effect, two distinct centers of acute distress appear. One is on the Northern Plains, extending to the Canadian border, the other is on the Southern or High Plains. The northern region included 75 counties and there were 44 counties in the southern.

The 803 counties included on the map in 1930 had nearly 5,750,000 persons on farms and this was decreased by 42,000 persons, or less than 1 percent, by 1935. Since about 350,000 persons moved from towns and cities to farms in these counties during the 5 years, and since there was a continued excess of births over deaths, the net migration from this area amounted to nearly 700,000 persons during the 5 years.

Sample surveys in this area have shown a large amount of local migration and a movement to nearby States, as well as to Pacific Coast States. Thus, a study in North Dakota for a recent year showed that only about one-third of the persons who moved from the farms of that State went to a place outside North Dakota.

The Pacific Coast States were the favorite destination of those who went outside North Dakota. These States - Washington, Oregon, and California, together with Idaho and Montana - received more than half the migrants from North Dakota. But the neighboring States, especially Minnesota and South Dakota, also received many of these migrants. In fact, during some years Minnesota received more of the migrants than any other State.

FIG. 7 - COMBINED INDEX OF DROUGHT INTENSITY
AVERAGE OF FIVE INDICES
1930-1936



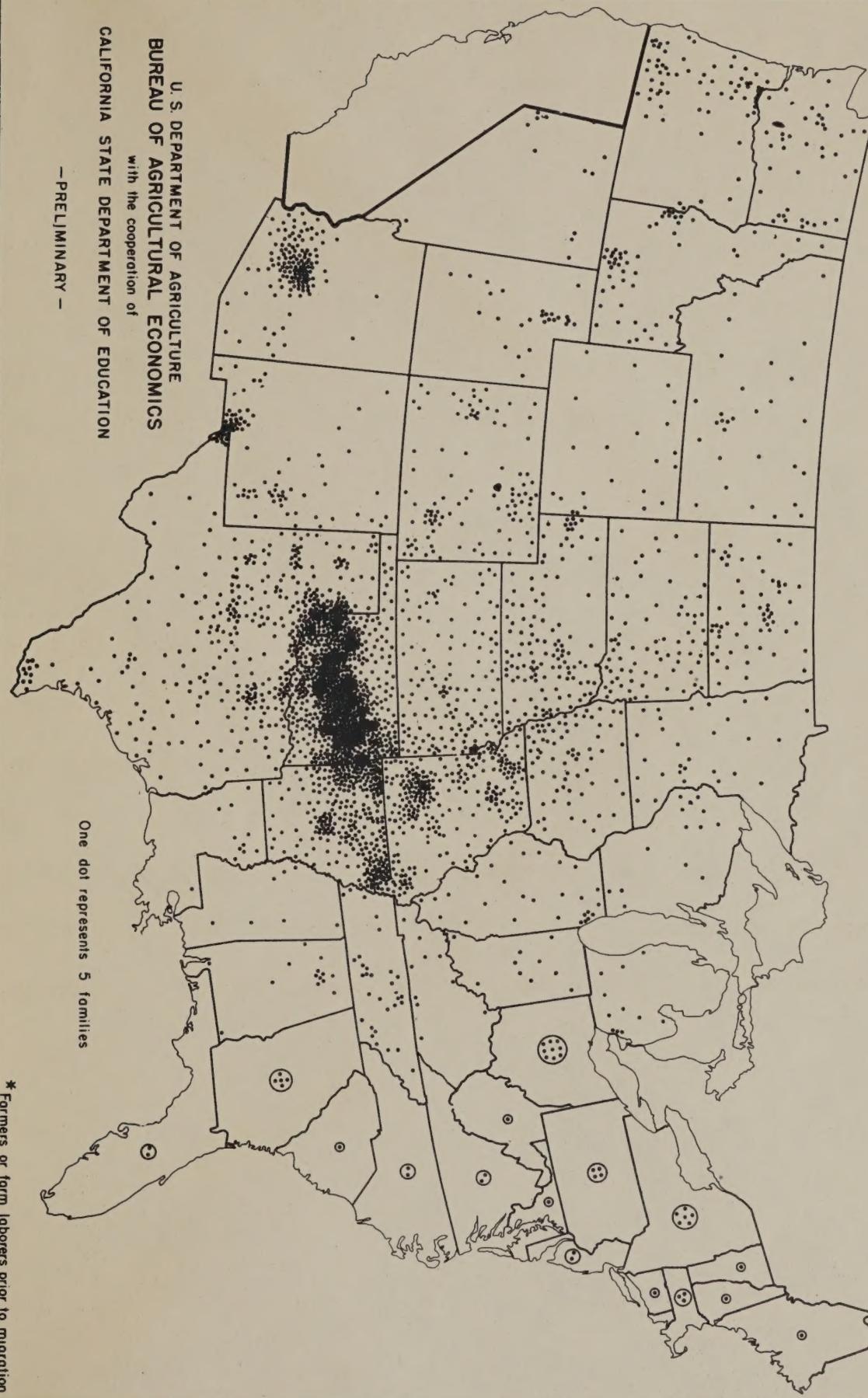
Residence in 1930 of Agricultural Families Moving
to California, between 1930 and 1939.

Industrial unemployment, as well as drought and continued mechanization of farming operations, have been important factors in recent migrations to California and other Far Western States.

Maps showing the 1930 residence of agricultural families living in California in 1939 point to areas where population pressure had become acute by 1930 as important contributing areas, especially in parts of eastern Oklahoma and in the Boston Mountains and surrounding areas in Arkansas. Here farm incomes in 1929 were low and rates of natural increase have been high. Rates of migration from rural areas were high before 1930.

Because of high birth rates in these areas in the past, the population of working age continued to increase rapidly after 1930, but the previous outlets in industrial employment were no longer available in the same volume as before. These conditions, and a lack of resources for profitable employment locally, created a serious relief problem. The current migrations to the Pacific Coast States have provided a partial substitute for the earlier migration to industrial centers.

RESIDENCE IN 1930 OF 16,681 AGRICULTURAL FAMILIES* MOVING TO CALIFORNIA
1930-39



* Farmers or farm laborers prior to migration

